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ABSTRACT

Part I of this annual report of the California State Department of Education on child care services addresses policy questions suggested by the legislative reporting requirements for child development programs. These requirements include descriptions of the children and families served, the agencies providing subsidized child care services, and the cost and quality of subsidized child care. (In the report, the term "program" refers to the specific funding source which determines the type of services to be provided.) (MP)

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Executive Summary

ANNUAL REPORT ON PUBLICLY SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE SERVICES

Part I
Child Development Programs

1979-80

PS012854

A Report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee
as Required by Education Code Section 8243.5

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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Wilson Riles—Superintendent of Public Instruction
Sacramento, 1982

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Education Code Section Requiring This Report:

Section 8243.5 Annual Report

Commencing November 1, 1977, and on or before November 1st for each year thereafter, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall submit to the Joint Budget Committee of the Legislature a descriptive report, as defined by Section 33403, on child development programs operating pursuant to this chapter during the preceding fiscal year. Each annual report shall include, but is not limited to, the following information, derived through sampling methods:

(a) Statistical data enumerating and describing children and families served by the programs, including distributions of families and children by income levels, by ethnic grouping, by children's ages, by marital status of parents, by reasons for receiving child care service (i.e., employment, training, education, protection), by public assistance status, and by family size.

(b) Statistical data enumerating and describing the characteristics of programs, including the types of programs in terms of size and type of facilities utilized, types of agencies operating programs as defined by Section 8313, and the staff-child ratios and the staff composition for each type of program and for each type of operating agency.

(c) Cost data describing the total costs and the average cost per hour of service for each type of program (as defined for purposes of subdivision (b)) and for each type of operating agency as defined by Section 8213.

(d) Evaluate data describing the quality of child development programs in accordance with measurement criteria as established by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Each annual child development report shall be in two parts: one part shall relate to subsidized child care services and one part shall relate to services under the State Preschool Program.

(Amended by Statutes of 1978, Chapter 828, Section 3.)

FINDINGS

A total of $176,368,262 was appropriated for child development services in fiscal year 1979-80. This funding provided subsidized child care services to an estimated 109,084 children.[1] Briefly summarizing the *Annual Report on Child Development Programs*, the following discussion addresses policy questions suggested by the legislative reporting requirements for child development programs. These requirements include descriptions of the children and families served, the agencies providing subsidized child care services, and the cost and quality of subsidized child care.

In this report, the term "program" is used to refer to the specific funding source which determines the type of services to be provided. For example, the School-Age Parenting and Infant Development Program provides mainly child care for the children of high school students, along with parenting classes for the students themselves. In another instance, services in the Migrant Child Care Program are essentially seasonal, as compared to those in the General Child Care Program which are offered year-round.

Finally, the term "agency" refers to the administrative unit, such as an office of the county superintendent of schols, while the term "facility" refers to the actual site, a center or home, where the child is cared for. Responsibilities of the agency are primarily administrative, while the facility is responsible for the daily instruction and care of the children.

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[1] Information regarding cumulative yearly enrollments of children was not available for either the school-age parenting or county welfare program. As such, this annual figure does not include estimates of the total number of children served during the year by these two programs. The figure cited represents a slight increase (2 percent) from 1978-79, when child development programs enrolled approximately 107,513 children, again excluding those in school-age parenting and county welfare programs. The count for 1978-79 was taken from the *1978-79 Annual Report for Child Development Services*, Appendix B, adjusted for missing documents. The count for 1979-80 is taken from the final quarterly fiscal reports and has also been adjusted for missing documents.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Are the programs serving the children and families intended to be served?

Child enrollments in the state's child development programs in fiscal year 1979-80 reflected the priorities set forth by the Legislature. Children receiving subsidized child care come from low-income families whose parents were either working, attending school, or enrolled in job training programs. The typical child was between three to five years of age and came from a low-income family headed by a single, working woman.

CHILD CARE AGENCIES

Is there a diversity of publicly and privately administered agencies delivering child development services?

Subsidized child care services are provided through a balance of public and private agencies. In October, 1979, public agencies accounted for 65 percent and private agencies 35 percent of all children enrolled in publicly subsidized child care services.

Is there a variety of child care facilities delivering child development services?

A total of 996 centers and 759 family child care homes provided subsidized child care services under direct contract with the Department of Education. Additionally, the Child Development Vendor Payment Program subsidized care provided through 616 centers and 1,192 family child care homes. Approximately 90 percent of the children served in October, 1979, were enrolled in child care centers, with the remaining 10 percent enrolled in family or group child care homes. The geographical distribution of services approximated the distribution of the state's child population.

Are child development programs adequately staffed in terms of numbers and training of caregivers?

Most child development programs maintained high adult/child ratios.[2] Facilities reported an average ratio of at least one staff hour for every eight hours of child enrollments. No differences in the adult/child ratios were detected between publicly and privately administered child care centers, either within or across programs.

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[2] "High" ratios refer to a small number of children per caregiver.

COST OF SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE SERVICES

What were the total costs to the state for each child development program?

Of the total $176,368,262 appropriated by the Legislature for child care services, 98 percent was allocated for direct services to children through the separate child development programs in fiscal year 1979-80 as follows:

1. Direct services to children

- General child care (Includes center and home-based programs under the Alternative Child Care Program)	$146,925,946
- Vendor payment	8,467,227
- Resource and referral	2,649,748
- Campus child care	3,559,412
- Migrant child care	4,031,427
- School-age parenting	2,877,196
- Handicapped	531,505
- Annualization	3,000,000
- Expansion	4,455,701
• Subtotal	$176,498,162

2. Indirect services to children

- Health administration	272,167
- Rent	316,462
• Subtotal	$588,629

3. State administration of child development programs (includes $1,002,178 of Title XX funding). $3,465,005

- Total Appropriation. $180,551,796

This funding[3] represented approximately 84 percent of all monies used to provide subsidized child care services. Additional sources of funds, such as parent fees, supplemented child development project funds. Of the total income received by child development agencies, approximately 75 percent was used to pay staff salaries and benefits.

What were the average per child costs to the agencies for child development services?

Agencies reported an average cost of $15.12 per average daily enrollment. Average daily enrollment unit rates among child development programs ranged from $9.55 for the Vendor Payment Program to $20.17 for the School-Age Parenting Program.

IMPLICATIONS

- Publicly subsidized child care is being provided, in accordance with legislative mandate, primarily to low-income families who are working or completing education or training.

- The child development program provides a variety of services, including family child care homes, before- and after-school care, infant care and parent education, child care referrals, and center-based care.

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[3] These figures are taken from the Budget Act of 1979-80. Funds allocated for "handicapped" services support seven child care programs for handicapped children jointly administered by the Office of Child Development and the Office of Special Education. Data on these centers are not included in this report. Additional federal funds were transferred from the Office of Special Education to the Office of Child Development to increase services to handicapped preschoolers enrolled in child development programs.

- The proportion of services for the handicapped provided in child care programs does not reflect the proportion of such services provided in the general school-age population. Low-income families with handicapped children often cannot afford necessary services. Consideration should be given to the availability of services to these children. This consideration should include a review of the number of handicapped children served through specialized programs, such as development centers, to determine the extent of the unmet need.

- The proportion of bilingual staff does not fully reflect the proportion of bilingual or non-English speaking children enrolled in publicly funded child care. Therefore, bilingual services should be increased to meet the needs of children who cannot benefit from English-only programs.

- Center-based programs in California (subsidized public, subsidized private, nonsubsidized private) provide children with an environment which provides them with a range of activities addressing a spectrum of developmental skill areas and caregivers who interact with children in ways associated with the development of competent preschool (younger than five years old) behaviors in children. Differences in program offerings among the various center types seem to be differences of emphasis rather than of substance.

- When characteristics of the physical environment, caregiver behavior, and child activities are compared, subsidized and nonsubsidized centers appear similar, except for the number of children enrolled and the provision of supplementary services. These services are provided primarily by referral, rather than being supported by program funds.

- Findings reveal relatively comparable group size and adult/child ratios across subsidized public, subsidized private, and nonsubsidized private centers. Included in this finding is the discovery that about half of the nonsubsidized private centers met or exceeded group size requirements, and about two-thirds met or exceeded adult/child ratio requirements. This finding suggests that one alternative for the expansion of subsidized child care lies in the use of currently nonsubsidized private centers. Such expansion could be accomplished without disrupting existing adult/child ratio and group size requirements.

- Findings of the quality of care study support the current practice of regulating and carefully monitoring adult/child ratio. However, the data do not support the need to regulate group size as stringently as is currently specified in regulations. The contribution of group size to the quality of care (defined in terms of caregiver behavior and child activities) is marginal, *once the adult/child ratio is regulated*. One alternative to regulating group size might be to issue guidelines providing recommendations for appropriate group sizes for various child activities.

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